FORM B – BUILDING

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Assessor's Number	USGS Quad	Area(s)	Form Number
1-12B	ORLEANS		EAS.91

Town/City: Town of Eastham

Place: *(neighborhood or village)*:
North Eastham

Address: 1965 Massasoit Road

Historic Name: Joseph M. & Ruth Dill House

Uses: Present: single-family residence

Original: single-family residence

Date of Construction: ca. 1733, ca. 1865

Source: local histories, deeds, census, vital records

Style/Form: Colonial/Cape Cod

Architect/Builder: unknown

Exterior Material:
Foundation: brick

Wall/Trim: wood shingle/wood

Roof: asphalt shingle

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:
None

Major Alterations *(with dates)*:
Additions on sides and rear, mid- & late- 20th c.
Doors and window sash replaced

Condition: good

Moved: no ☐ yes ☒ **Date:** ca. 1865

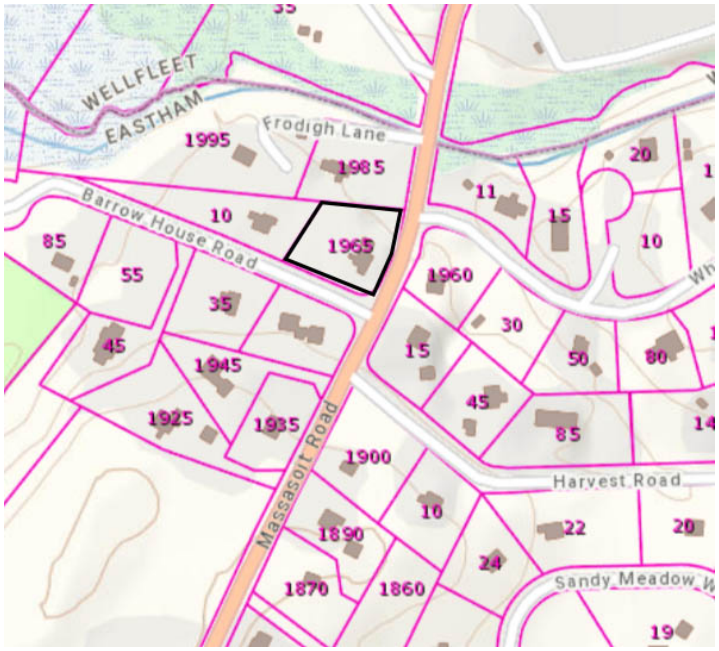
Acreage: 0.54

Setting: The property is located on a historic highway at the northern limits of Eastham and situated of late-20th-century residential subdivisions.

Photograph

View from

Locus Map (north at top)



Source: Mass GIS Oliver Parcel Viewer

Recorded by: Kathryn Grover & Neil Larson
Larson Fisher Associates

Organization: Eastham Historical Commission

Date: June 2020

☐ Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The origins of the Joseph M. & Ruth Dill House are unknown, it reputedly having been moved to its present location from Wellfleet in the 1860s. It is believed to have been built ca. 1733, although no documentation for its construction history ot previous location has been recorded beyond the recollection of a local historian. A full investigation of the house is needed to confirm the history as told.

The house conforms to 18th-century models of the traditional Cape Cod house in its fullest extent, that is a center chimney plan with two front rooms separated by an entry lobby with stairs in front of the chimney and a kitchen in the rear, all with fireplaces in the stack. The five-bay front façade ha a center entrance aligned with the chimney, with its header, as well as those of the flanking windows tight against a shallow cornice at the eave line. The door and its transom have been replaced as have window sash. Wings have been added to the ends, a one-story sunroom on the south side and a bedroom addition on the north, which have compromised the fenestration patterns on the end walls. The rear of the house has been significantly altered by the addition of a wall dormer, window changes and the addition of the wings.

The house has been isolated on a half-acre lot in a subdivision of its farm and occupies the corner of Massasoit and Barrow House roads, the latter providing access into a residential development. The lot is characterized by an open yard with a driveway and parking area off the secondary road; trees have been permitted to grow up along the boundaries to provide some privacy.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

The house now numbered 1965 Massasoit Road does not appear on the 1858 map of Eastham, and research by local historian Shirley Nickerson Williams has suggested that the house was moved twice since its construction, probably in Wellfleet, about 1733. The absence of it being depicted on the 1858 map of Eastham corroborates this account somewhat. The map shows Isaiah H. and Abigail Dill's house at 1765 Massasoit Road (EAS.88) to the south and Columbus Dill's house (not extant) across the street of the site of 1965 Massasoit Road. The attributed date of construction needs verification by a more intensive physical inspection. The house apparently was moved to its current location for Joseph M. Dill, Jr. around 1865 when he set up an independent household. Prior to this, Dill and his family were living with his uncle and stepfather Columbus Dill.

Joseph Mulford Dill Jr. (1830-1908) was the son of Joseph M. Dill (1803-48) and Tamsen Lincoln (1806-73), who likely owned the house on the east side of Massasoit Road associated with Joseph's brother Columbus on the 1858 map. Joseph M. Dill was enumerated in a household of four in the 1830 Eastham census just after the household of his probably widowed mother Huldah Smith Dill (1775-1860). The first member of the Dill family in Eastham appears to have been Joseph M. Dill's great-grandfather Thomas Dill, who was born in Medford in 1708 and, judging by the birth records of his children, moved to Eastham between 1737 and 1739. Joseph M. Dill's father Benjamin (born 1763), who married Huldah Smith in 1789, was first listed in Eastham censuses in 1800. The enumeration order of federal censuses from 1830 forward suggests that Joseph M. Dill was living in a house next to that of his father's former homestead.

Joseph M. Dill Sr. drowned in Wellfleet Bay in 1848, having been knocked overboard by the boom on the schooner *Sharp Shooter* not far from shore.[1] The 1850 census lists the widowed Tamsen Gill in this neighborhood with sons Sylvanus, Joseph M. Jr., and George, all mariners; ten-year-old son Hosea, and daughters Betsey, Tamsen, Mercy, Martha, and Phebe. In 1851 Tamsen Lincoln Dill married her late husband's younger brother Columbus Dill (1805-92), and he took up residence with the widow in his brother's house. In 1855 and 1860 Joseph M. Dill Jr. and his siblings were all living in their stepfather's household, but by 1865 Joseph had left maritime work and was living in his own household with the widow Ruth Lincoln Nickerson (1829-96), who probably kept house for him.[2] She was the daughter of Doane and Ruth Lincoln of Eastham and widow of mariner Samuel Nickerson Jr. who she married in 1849. Joseph and Ruth married in 1866.

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[1] *Yarmouth Register*, 12 October 1848, 2. On the Dill family see Randall J. Seaver's documented "Descendants of Peter Dill (1645-1692)" (October 2012), Scribd website.

[2] In late December 1853 Joseph M. Dill and four others rescued the crew of the packet brig *Mary Stanton* when it ran aground at Eastham during a winter storm and broke in two. The Eastham men used ropes to reach the crew, who had clung to the brig's riggings for nine hours

Continuation sheet 1

In 1870 David Higgins, his sister-in-law Mary S. Higgins, and Mary's daughter Fannie K. Higgins sold to Joseph M. Dill all of the land surrounding his house but not including the half-acre on which Dill's house stood, "as we have no claim to it."[3] Deeds do not indicate when and by whom this half-acre was carved out of the Higginses' larger parcel. By 1870 Joseph M. Dill was a fisherman with $567 in real property in a household with his wife, their son Joseph M. Jr., and his wife's children by her first marriage, Samuel A. and Mary E. Nickerson, both teenagers. A four-month-old granddaughter, Celia Gill, was also part of the household and remained there through at least 1910. The 1880 map attaches the name "J. Dill" to the house, and in 1880 Joseph M Dill was again farming but had only an acre of tilled land and 26 other acres and a farm worth $600. Ruth Lincoln Nickerson Dill died in 1896, and in 1900 Joseph M. Dill was living in the house with his son Joseph M. Jr, born in 1867, and Celia Gill.[4]

Joseph M. Dill died in January 1908, and the 1965 Massasoit Road house passed to his son Joseph M. Jr., who in 1905 married Truro native Sara Etta Freeman. In 1910 the census lists Dill as a farmer living with his wife, his niece Celia A. Gill (shown here as "Dill," and divorced), and his half-brother Samuel A. Nickerson, who worked with him on the farm. By 1920 Dill and Nickerson were farming asparagus; in 1930 Joseph M. Dill was employed as a road worker, while Nickerson was said to be a farm worker. The 1940 census lists Joseph M. and Sarah Dill alone in the Massasoit Road house.

Joseph M. Dill died in 1945, and in 1946 his widow Sarah Freeman Dill deeded the 1965 Massasoit Road property to her sister Almena Linfield Freeman (1899-1982) and to locomotive engineer Francis Thatcher Nye (1876-1956) as joint tenants.[5] Sarah and Almena were the daughters of railroad section hand and later foreman Alvin L. Freeman and his wife Lilla L. Lincoln, and Almena had remained in her parents' households in Truro and Provincetown. Her mother died in 1926, and she and her father moved from Provincetown to Barnstable in 1935. By 1940 they were lodging in the home of Francis T. Nye, who was married but whose wife was confined to Foxboro State Hospital. By 1946 Almena Freeman, her father, and Nye were living at 1965 Massasoit Road, and Alvin Freeman died there that year.

A native of Dennis, Francis T. Nye began working on the Old Colony Railroad as a fireman in 1895 and became an engineer in December 1904. From 1834 to 1945 he ran freight trains between Hyannis and Provincetown. He died in Eastham in July 1956, and in September of the same year Almena Freeman deeded the Massasoit Road property, then 5.46 acres, to herself, her remarried sister Sarah Etta Freeman Dill, and Sarah's second husband Leon Smith (1897-1966); they had married in 1951. By 1969 Almena Freeman was sole owner when she sold the property to Edward D. and Ruth E. Johnston and reserved life tenancy for herself. She died in Barnstable in 1982. By 1980 the Johnstons had subdivided the tract and in that year sold the 1965 Massasoit Road house on a 1.1-acre lot to Donald W. and Virginia Delaney, who owned it for less than three years. They again subdivided the tract and sold the house on a roughly half-acre lot to Sherwin P. and Pauline S. Bardsley of Westborough. The Bardsleys owned 1965 Massasoit Road until 2017, when they sold it to John C. Hester III and Alison M. Hester of Wellfleet.[6]

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and pulled them up sixty feet to the shore; one man died soon afterward. Joseph Dill and his brother-in-law James F. Holbrook each received ten dollars, and Joseph's brother Columbus Dill, son George, and Joseph Lincoln each received five dollars from the Massachusetts Humane Society for their rescue efforts. See "Shipping News," *Boston Courier*, 5 January 1854, 2; *Yarmouth Register*, 17 February 1854, 2.

[3] David Higgins, Mary S. Higgins, and Fannie K. Higgins to Joseph M. Dill, 9 August 1870, BCD 104:537.

[4] Joseph M. Dill Jr. was a fisherman in 1893 when he married Provincetown native and dressmaker Lucy Hamilton. In 1900 he was indicted for having performed an abortion, found guilty, and sentenced to from four to five years in state prison. On 23 June 1903 he was pardoned on the ground that, "owing to newly discovered evidence . . . the case was not entirely clear against Dill." On 22 October 1904 Dill was granted a divorce from his wife Lucy, whom he sued on grounds of desertion, and he is shown as divorced when he married again in April 1905. See *Barnstable Patriot*, 9 April 1900; "Special Messages," *Acts and Resolves Passed by the General Court of Massachusetts in the Year 1904* (Boston: Wright & Potter, 1904), 568; *Yarmouth Register*, 22 October 1904, 2.

[5] Sarah E. Dill to Almena L. Freeman and Francis T. Nye, 20 July 1946, BCD 661:477.

[6] Almena L. Freeman to Leon E. and Sarah E. Smith and Almena L. Freeman, 17 September 1956, BCD 955:412; Almena L. Freeman, Massasoit Road, to Edward D. and Ruth E. Johnston, Massasoit Road, 12 September 1969, BCD 1449:270; Ruth E. Johnston to Donald W. and Virginia Delaney, Barrow House Road, 3 September 1980, BCD 3147:346; Donald W. and Virginia Delaney, Barrow House Road, to Sherwin P. and Pauline S. Bardsley, Westborough, 15 June 1983, BCD 3771:294; Pauline S. Bardsley, trustee Pauline S. Bardsley 2010 Irrevocable Trust, and Pauline S. Bardsley, trustee Sherwin P. Bardsley 2010 Irrevocable Trust, and Pauline S. Barndsley, Grafton MA, to John C. Hester II and Alison M. Hester, Wellfleet, 9 May 2017, BCD 30498:49. According to BCD 1449:270, Edward D. Johnston subdivided the parcel in 1968, but this plan was not recorded. The house is depicted on Lot 6 on "Subdivision Plan of Land in Eastham (North) Mass. as Surveyed and Prepared for Donald W. Delaney," May 1973, BCP 274:35, and on Lot 6-B on "Plan on Land in Eastham (North), Mass. Owned by Donald W. & Virginia Delaney," 27 October 1982, BCP 369:85.

Continuation sheet 2

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MAPS
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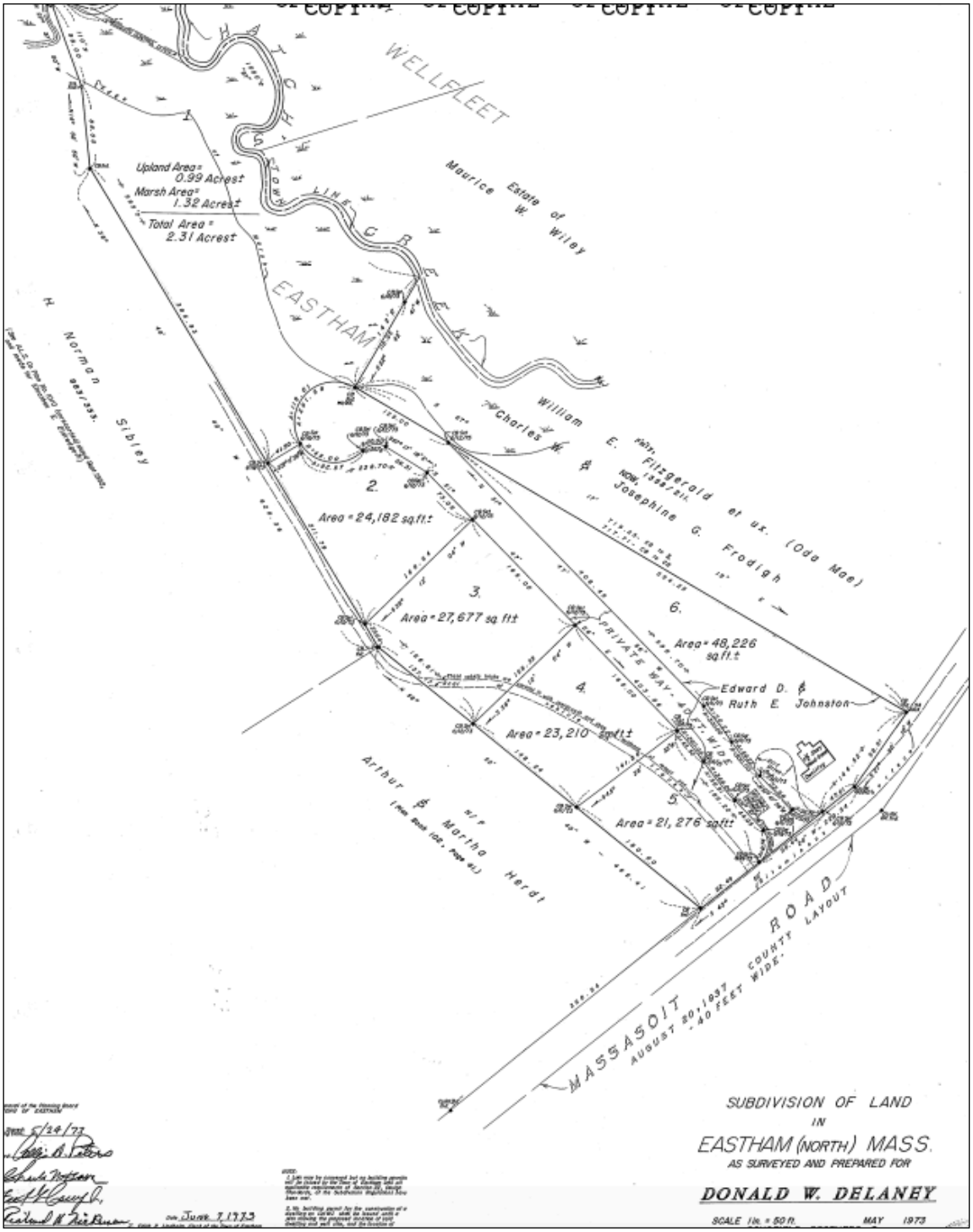
PHOTOGRAPHS

(credit Larson Fisher Associates, 2019 unless otherwise noted)

View from SW.

SUPPLEMENTAL IMAGES



The 1965 Massasoit Road house is shown on Lot 6 of this 1973 subdivision plan (BCP 274:35); its lot was further divided in 1982 (BCP 369:85).